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LETTER DATED 23 AUGUST 1996 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ERITREA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to forward the attached letter addressed to you from H.E. Mr. Petros Solomon, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea, dated 23 August 1996, concerning the situation in the Lesser Hanish islands in the Red Sea, which I received today.

I should be grateful if you would kindly arrange to have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Amdemicael KAHSAI
Permanent Representative

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Annex

Letter dated 23 August 1996 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Eritrea addressed to the President of the Security Council

You will have been informed of the unilateral decision that the Government of Eritrea has taken to evacuate from the island of Lesser Hanish as a gesture of its goodwill to ensure the unhindered progress of the arbitration process to which it is firmly committed, and, in the interests of peace in the region. My Government has in fact taken the decision while fully acknowledging the lack of convincing evidence to disprove its presence in the island.

While these are the facts of the matter, we have been surprised to learn that the Security Council considers the prevailing situation as a cause for alarm prompting it to call for the "immediate Eritrean withdrawal". It is not for us to speculate on what forces might be pushing for this unwarranted move, but we would like to believe that the Security Council is not being unduly influenced by the mendacious accusations coming from Yemen which, in practice, is indulging in provocative acts to hamper the constructive decision we have taken to promote the arbitration process. I have in mind the provocative incidents perpetrated by Yemen on 19 August 1996, only one day after having been officially notified by the Government of France of our decision to evacuate.

(Signed) Petros SOLOMON